

Telling America’s Story

The Statue of Liberty. The American Museum of Natural History. Central Park. New York Harbor’s 48 million tourists and 10 million residents are attracted to these internationally-renowned resources of beauty, culture, history and open space whether national, city or privately run. We envision leveraging the brand cachet of these quintessentially New York historic icons to connect people to a shared heritage to be found at destinations throughout the harbor. Visitors to ‘iconic’ sites will be presented opportunities to discover and become stewards of the lesser-known, but equally important resources that taken together fully tell the American Story through the pages and places of its greatest city.



First Steps:

- Create a ‘civic literacy’ center at Federal Hall National Memorial in partnership with the National Archives and Record Administration that helps people—especially students—become effective and responsible citizens, tenets basic to our system of self-government.
- Develop and deliver new, coordinated teacher workshops and distance learning programs to New York City and Northern New Jersey schools that link the stories of Ellis Island and the Statue of Liberty with those of the Lower East Side Tenement Museum.
- Complete the transition, already underway, to the use of new and social media platforms to provide virtual and physical visitors with rich interpretive content and tell America’s stories using ‘Web 2.0’ tools of communications that cultivate relevancy among new audiences. NPNH sites will be featured in six free smart-phone applications and multiple video podcasts from the official NPS iTunes store.

The National Parks of New York Harbor:
Creating a Great Urban Park

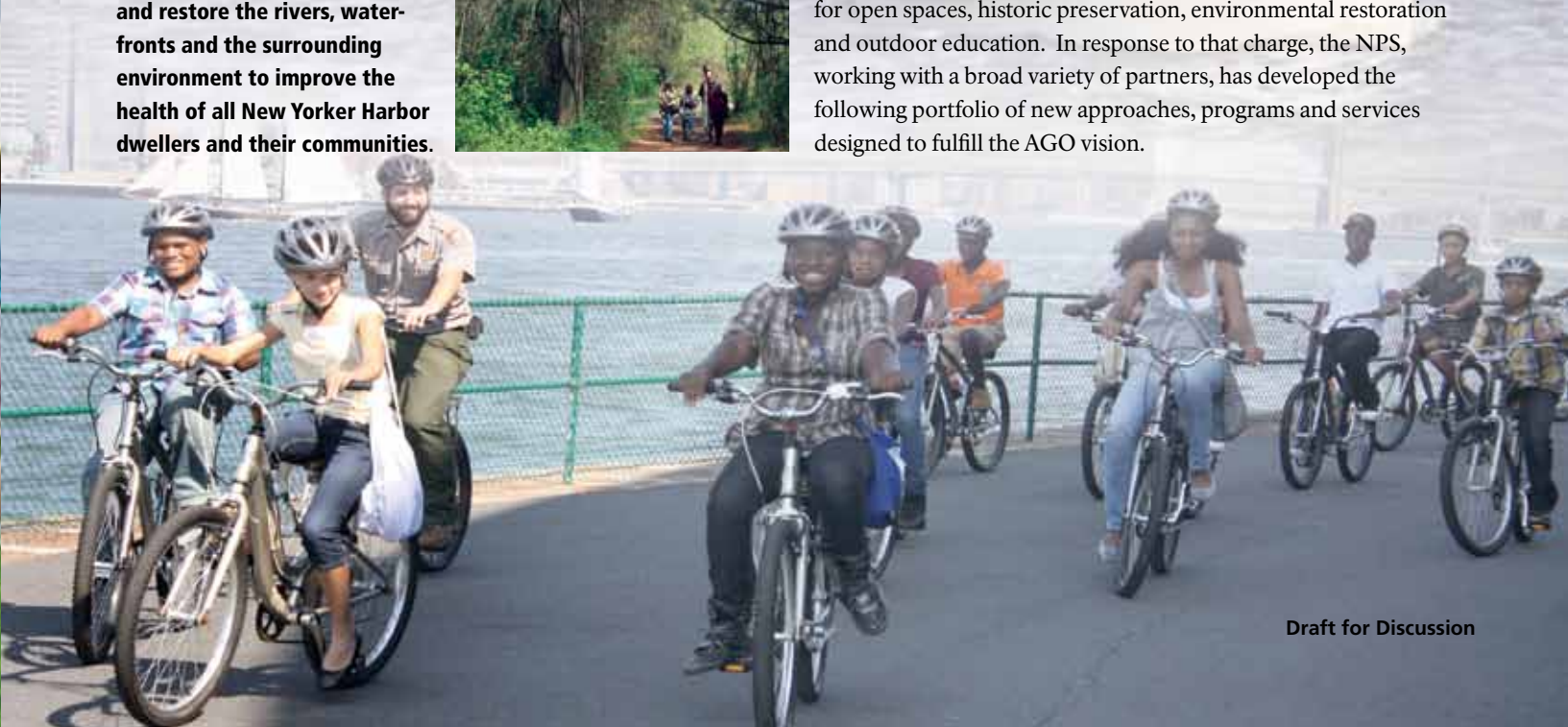
VISION:
The New York Harbor area, in many ways the hub of New York City and Northern New Jersey, is a renowned destination for its culture, history and vibrant lifestyle. It also has a treasure trove of iconic parks and historic sites—Central Park, the Statue of Liberty, Ellis Island, Liberty State Park, Jamaica Bay. We will harness the tremendous potential of these special places by linking them more closely to each other and to the living fabric of the community. We will coordinate the talents, resources and constituencies of these community resources, thereby elevating the connections, relevancy and support for the entire 57,800 acres managed here between the National Park Service and the New York and New Jersey departments of parks and recreation. Our collaborative efforts will connect communities and especially youth to America’s Great Outdoors, inspire a new generation’s interest in history and restore the rivers, waterfronts and the surrounding environment to improve the health of all New Yorker Harbor dwellers and their communities.



On April 16, 2010, President Obama launched the America’s Great Outdoors (AGO) Initiative and challenged the federal agencies to be a great partner with communities to reconnect all Americans to our great outdoors. With more than 60% of the American population living in urban areas, urban parks are critical to this effort.

New York City and the surrounding metropolitan area is a premier urban environment deserving of a world-class system of parks, open-spaces and cultural resources. The National Park Service manages more than 26,000 acres of natural and historic properties; the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation manages approximately 29,000 acres of land for parks and recreation. The New Jersey Division of Parks and Forestry manages 2,800 prime acres near the Harbor. Numerous other private or public entities manage yet more spaces. The largest contiguous open-space in the area is Gateway National Recreation Area’s Jamaica Bay; the most well-known and accessible is the city’s Central Park. These combined 57,800 acres in dozens of places, despite their proximity and shared constituency, are not managed in a deliberate, complementary manner. Inspired by AGO, government at all levels can work cooperatively with the private sector to offer world-class cultural experiences and opportunities to enjoy the outdoors that New York Harbor residents and visitors deserve.

As part of this effort, Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar challenged the National Parks of New York Harbor to become a model for AGO’s goal of establishing “a new generation of Great Urban Parks and community green spaces.” Secretary Salazar recognized that with its unsurpassed wealth of national, state and local parks, national historic landmarks, and a working, historical waterfront, New York Harbor offers an opportunity for federal, state and local partners to work together toward a shared vision for open spaces, historic preservation, environmental restoration and outdoor education. In response to that charge, the NPS, working with a broad variety of partners, has developed the following portfolio of new approaches, programs and services designed to fulfill the AGO vision.



**Restoring the New York Harbor
Metropolitan Area’s Open Spaces
and Waterways**

We will coordinate the often disparate and fragmented approach among the many entities working to protect and provide access to the New York Harbor estuary, centered on Jamaica Bay, the “lungs” of the harbor and the rivers that feed into it. A natural harbor, recovered and rediscovered, will become a place where water quality supports healthy fish and shellfish, and recreational activities such as sailing, fishing, birding and hiking are familiar pursuits—an unrivaled natural and recreational resource for millions of residents and visitors alike.



First Steps:

- Establish a Center for Urban Ecology where the efforts of the 17 agencies and non-governmental partners on the Jamaica Bay Task Force can be coordinated, and seek private sector funding to enhance them. This center, potentially located at Fort Tilden, will serve as a hub for resident and visiting scientists, and feature laboratories, a library, lodging, office space, vessels and docking areas.
- Co-host a Jamaica Bay Watershed Protection Plan symposium highlighting current research activities and actions by public and private organization to improve the ecological health of the bay, in part by enlisting the New York City Department of Environmental Protection.
- Continue ongoing multi-agency salt marsh restoration in Jamaica Bay with the goal of increasing the amount of sustainable healthy marsh to 1,200 acres within a 10 year period.

Draft for Discussion

**Connecting People to Parks, Rivers
and Landmarks**

We envision a seamless network of bike and foot trails, blueways and public transit routes that easily connect people from neighborhoods to parks, open space, shorelines and historic sites throughout New York Harbor. This cohesive and sustainable transportation system promotes close to home opportunities for play, wonder, exploration and learning. People find a variety of ways to have fun, learn new skills and celebrate culture.



First Steps:

- Complete the missing links to finish the extensive New York Harbor trail and greenway network by collaborating with New York City and New Jersey agencies and local communities including the development of a one-mile section through Jacob Riis Park that connects the Rockaway peninsula with the Jamaica Bay Greenway.
- Establish a community outreach program that invites neighborhood associations, health and social service providers and local groups to collaboratively develop relevant programs, events, and outdoor spaces in both parks and communities.
- Create orientation and transportation hubs for ferry service, transit and trail linkages with the New York City Departments of Environmental Protection, Transportation, Parks & Recreation and other partners throughout the harbor.

Draft for Discussion

**Connecting Youth, Heritage,
and the Out of Doors**

Imagine a future where urban parents share life-changing park experiences with their children. In the future, park rangers, preservationists and scientists from city, state and national parks will coordinate a network of programs and services that engage youth in activities at playgrounds and service clubs, in churches and schools and, of course, in parks with a special emphasis on traditionally underserved communities. Our coordinated strategies will help assure that every child has a chance to participate in ways that engender a love of recreation, the out of doors and of heritage, and that foster both a stewardship commitment and an awareness of employment options.



First Steps:

- Develop the largest urban park campground in America at Floyd Bennett Field. Over a two-year period beginning in 2011, the campground will expand from 5 to 90 sites, including both traditional campsites and RV sites. The campground may ultimately contain 600 sites. Special outreach to underserved communities around the area will introduce families to camping skills and equipment in their home neighborhoods and will facilitate participation in overnight use, complete with campfire programs, kayaking and swimming opportunities.
- Create one new, coordinated portal for educators and school administrators to locate available curriculum-based programs, both on-site and online, internship opportunities and service projects suitable for both individual students and entire schools. City, state and national parks as well as non-profit youth organizations will populate the site jointly and coordinate programs for maximum reach.
- Establish a NPNH Preservation Field School in cooperation with New York and New Jersey educational institutions and historic preservation organizations. NPNH sites will serve as the training grounds for students from diverse backgrounds to learn high quality historic preservation trades through classroom and hands-on instruction.